

# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Websites for WSDOT winter information

- Winter Information  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter)
- WSDOT Newsroom  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/news](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/news)
- E-mail or Text Alerts  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/inform](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/inform)
- Mountain Pass Reports  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes)
- Cameras and Traffic Alerts  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic)
- Weather  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/weather](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/weather)
- Road Temperatures  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/roadtemps](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/roadtemps)
- Commercial Vehicle Services  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/commercialvehicle](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/commercialvehicle)
- Winter Roadway Treatments  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter/anti](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter/anti)
- Washington State Patrol  
[www.wsp.wa.gov](http://www.wsp.wa.gov)

Call 5-1-1 for travel information and mountain pass conditions. Also, program your radio to WSDOT's Highway Advisory Radio before you leave: 530 AM and 1610 AM.



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**



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**2010-2011**

# WinterDriving Guide



## WHAT'S INSIDE

- How to prepare for winter driving
- What to carry on winter trips
- Traction tires and advisories
- Studded tires and tire chains



## How do I prepare my car for winter?

- Get it tuned up
- Check the brakes, battery, lights, wipers, antifreeze, heater/defrost, belts, hoses, filters and oil

## What should I carry on winter trips?

### Basic safety gear

- ☐ tire chains
- ☐ ice scraper
- ☐ snow brush
- ☐ jumper cables
- ☐ small shovel
- ☐ tow chain

### Break-down kit

- ☐ cell phone
- ☐ blanket
- ☐ gloves
- ☐ flashlight
- ☐ food
- ☐ water
- ☐ first aid kit
- ☐ road flares
- ☐ cash

## Driving in snow and ice

WSDOT maintenance crews work to keep traffic moving. But drivers should prepare for winter driving because no one can guarantee the roads will be clear of ice and snow.

- On ice and snow, take it slow.
- Do not be the driver who shuts down the pass! Drive for conditions – slower speeds, slower acceleration, slower steering, and slower braking in winter conditions.
- Use your headlights.
- Don't use cruise control.
- Four and all-wheel drive vehicles will not stop or steer better in icy conditions than two-wheel drive vehicles.
- Leave extra room between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. And remember, big trucks take longer to stop.
- Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges, or shady spots.
- If you find yourself behind a snowplow, stay behind it until it is safe to pass. Remember that a snowplow driver has a limited field of vision. Stay back (15 car lengths) until you're sure it is safe to pass or until the plow pulls off the road.
- Slow down and be extra cautious near the chain-up and removal areas. There are often people out of their vehicles moving around.
- Learn about WSDOT's winter roadway treatments at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter).

## Are my tires traction tires?

Talk to your local tire dealer and find out if your tires meet Washington's traction tire requirements. Your tire dealer can help you select the best option for your travel. Plan ahead and remember tire dealers are busiest before and during winter storms.

## Studded tire information

- Washington allows studded tires from November 1 through March 31. There is no individual exception to the studded tire season. The department will review the weather forecast and may extend the deadline if significant winter conditions persist. If this happens, we will communicate to the public and post information to the WSDOT website. WSDOT must evaluate weather across the entire state and the higher-elevation highways are only a small part of the overall highway system.
- We advise drivers who plan to travel into high elevations after March 31 to remove studded tires but carry chains.
- Drivers who have studded tires should also carry chains. Studded tires do meet the traction tire requirement, but do NOT meet the chain requirement. If chains are required, you will need to install chains even if you have studded tires.

## Should I carry chains?

Yes. If WSDOT posts a chain advisory, law enforcement will require drivers without chains to turn around. Violators may be issued a citation. Remember, in extreme weather conditions, the chain requirement may include four- and all-wheel drive vehicles. Talk to your local tire dealer about which chains are the best fit for your vehicle and practice installing them. Vehicles over 10,000 gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), including some larger passenger trucks, SUVs, RVs, and vehicles towing trailers, must carry chains November 1 through March 31.

**TRACTION  
TIRES  
ADVISED**

## What do traction advisories mean?

Traction Tires Advised - Oversize loads prohibited. This means oversize vehicles are restricted from roadways during severe weather conditions. Refer to Commercial Vehicle Services Website for overload definition.

Traction Tires Required – When you see this, all passenger vehicles must have approved traction tires. And, chains are required on all vehicles over 10,000 gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), including large passenger trucks and SUVs over 10,000 GVWR.

Tire Chains Required (except four- and all-wheel drive) – Every vehicle (except four- and all-wheel drive) must install chains. In extreme weather conditions, the advisory may indicate chains are required on four- and all-wheel drive vehicles. Please remember, studded tires do not meet the chain requirement.

## Why is the road closed?

Drivers who go too fast for conditions, or are not prepared for winter travel may end up in the ditch, or blocking other drivers. It takes only one unprepared or careless driver to stop or slow traffic. Be prepared for winter travel; be extra cautious and slow down. One of the most common reasons we close the pass is to get blocking cars off the road so others can travel over the mountains.

### Other reasons include:

- Avalanche Control: When possible, we do avalanche control work when traffic volumes are low. We may have to do emergency avalanche control work and will attempt to provide advance notice, but this may not always be possible.
- Road Clearing: If we have heavy snow in a short amount of time, we may close the pass to clear ice and snow from travel lanes.